

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5038

As Passed Senate, March 3, 2009

Title: An act relating to making technical corrections to gender-based terms.

Brief Description: Making technical corrections to gender-based terms.

Sponsors: Senators Kohl-Welles, King, Keiser, Franklin and Pridemore; by request of Statute Law Committee.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Labor, Commerce & Consumer Protection: 1/15/09 [DP].
Passed Senate: 3/03/09, 45-3.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, COMMERCE & CONSUMER PROTECTION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Kohl-Welles, Chair; Keiser, Vice Chair; Holmquist, Ranking Minority Member; Franklin, Honeyford, King and Kline.

Staff: Kathleen Buchli (786-7488)

Background: Since 1983 state law requires that all statutes be written in gender-neutral terms, unless a specification of gender is intended. In 2007 the Legislature passed ESB 5063, an act relating to removing gender references. The act changed gender-specific terms to gender-neutral terms in several chapters of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW), including those chapters dealing with firefighters, police officers, bondspersons, and material suppliers.

The Legislature directed the Code Reviser, in consultation with the Statute Law Committee, to develop and implement a plan to correct gender-specific references in the entire RCW. The Code Reviser must make annual legislative recommendations to make the RCW completely gender-neutral by June 30, 2015.

Summary of Bill: Gender-specific terms and references are made gender-neutral in several Titles of the RCW. For example, references to "man" or "men" are changed to "person" or "persons," "councilman" is changed to "councilmember," and "chairman" is changed to "chair." Titles relating to local and state government and insurance are included and are

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made gender-neutral throughout. Other code sections are included, such as sections that contain business regulations, to modify specific references to "man" or "men."

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Over 3000 sections in the code have outdated gender references. One or two bills a year for the next seven years could accomplish the update to gender neutral language in a cost-effective way. References to all of humanity lead the bill and should be fixed as soon as possible, followed by titles with the most archaic references that need to be updated. The Code Reviser's office has consulted a number of different references to find the best replacement terms for these archaic references.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Kyle Thiessen, Code Reviser.